

LORD'S TEACHING THROUGH THE TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE NATIONS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DIDACHE

Worship and guidance have been at the forefront of humanity's existence since the making of man from the dust of the earth, and the woman from the rib of a man. Even existing before the creation of the heavens and the earth, the angelic host have likewise been committed to the regulative principles of worship and guidance by God. In the early Church—which was established by God Incarnate before ascending to the Throne of Glory—both have manifested themselves in accordance with the will of the Unseen Father through His first emissaries. From this manifestation, *the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations*, was published for the edification of the saints.

This, *the Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations*, or simply the *Didache*, became one of the earliest sources of canon law and catechism. Contemporarily dated—as of 2024—to the first century AD/CE, this holy traditional document provided instruction from the Jewish Christians to the Gentile, or Pauline Christians.

Having been preserved in observance by the Ancient Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church since its separation with the Melkites who wrongfully deposed Saint Eustathius the Great of Antioch during the Council of Nicaea, this is one of the primary canons, or measures of rule or, in layperson's terms, guiding documents, toward the proclamation and living of the true Orthodox, Catholic, and Apostolic Christian religion.

CHAPTER 1

There are two ways—one of life, and one of death; but, there is a great difference between these two ways. Of the way of life, there is indeed this: first, you will love the God Who made you, secondly, you will love your neighbor as yourself. Now, all the things you do not want to have happen to you, you too do not do these to one another. The teaching of these sayings is this: praise those who curse you, and pray for your enemies; then, fast for

those who persecute you. What favor is there if you love those who love you, for do not the Gentiles do the same? Love those who hate you, however, and you will have no enemies.

Hold yourself away from the fleshly and cosmic strong desires. If someone should give you a blow to your right cheek, turn to him also the left one, and you will be whole. If anyone should force you to go one mile, go thereafter another with them. If anyone takes your cloak, give them your tunic too; and if anyone takes what is yours away from you, do not ask for it back—for you are neither able to. Give to everyone who asks from you, do not ask for it back, because the Father wants to give His own free gifts to each and every person.

Blessed are they who give according to the precept, for they are guiltless. Woe be to the one who takes, however. For if someone indeed takes who has a need, they shall be guiltless; but the one who has no need will give a judgment as to why they took, for what reason, and they will come under arrest and be examined about what they have done in the eyesight of the Lord. They will not go out from there until they have paid the last quadrans, but, it has also been said about this: to let your charitable gifts sweat in your hands, until indeed you know who to give these things to.

Now, the second precept of the teaching is this: you will not murder. You will not commit adultery. You will not be a pederast, and you will not have unlawful sex. You will not steal, nor practice magic nor sorcery. You will not murder a child by abortion, nor will you destroy that which is born. You will not strongly desire your neighbor's things. You will not take vain oaths. You will not give false witness. You will not utter bad things, and you will not remember those things. You will not be double-tongued nor minded, for of such is the snare of death. Your message is not to be false or empty, but being filled with practice. You should neither be greedy nor a swindler, nor hypocrite, nor malicious, nor high-minded. You will not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You will hate upon any person, but you will reprove, and pray, and some you will love more than your own life.

Flee from every evil thing, and from everything that is like unto it. Do not become angry, for anger is the pathway to murder. Do not become foolishly jealous, nor be the one who creates strife, nor overly emotional. Murderers and murders are born out of all of these. Likewise, do not become strongly desirous, for strong desire is the way to sexual sin. Neither should you be a speaker of filth, nor high-eyed and minded. Adulteries are born out of all of these things.

Do not become someone who looks for omens, since this is the way to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a cleanser. Do not desire to even look at these things, for idolatry is born out of all these things.

Do not become a liar, since lying is the way of the thief. Do not be greedy, nor a lover of money, nor become worthlessly conceited. Thefts are born out of all these things. Do not become a grumbler, since it leads to speaking evil things. Do not be an assumer, nor evil-minded. Evil-speakings are born from these. Instead, be meek, since the meek will inherit the earth. Become long-suffering and merciful, guiltless, and quiet, and good, and through everything tremble at the sayings you have heard. You will not exalt yourself, nor will you give over to boldness in your soul. Your soul will not cling with the high people, but you will conduct yourself with the just and lowly ones. Accept the things that transpire to you as good workings, knowing that nothing happens without God.

Remember throughout the day the one who is speaking God's message to you. Honor them as you would honor the Lord. For where the lordship may be spoken, there is the Lord. Now, daily you will seek out the faces of the holy ones, so that you will be refreshed by their words. You will not, likewise, seek or want division, but you will make peace with those who are fighting. You will judge righteously. In giving a reproof of a wandering, you will not respect anyone's presence. You will not be two-souled regarding whether or not it should be.

Do not become as the one who stretches out their hands for taking but draws them in for giving. If you have, you will give by your hands a ransom for your sins. You will not hesitate to give, nor will you grumble while giving. For you will know who it is that is the nice payer of the reward. You will not turn away the one who is needy, but you will share all things together with your brother and sister, and you will not claim them to be your own things. If you are partners in what is immortal, how much are you partners in what is mortal?

You will not take your hand away from your son or your daughter, but from youth you will teach them the reverence of the Lord. You will not give directives in your bitterness to your servants or handmaids, for these are hoping in the same God. If you do, they may not have the same reverential fear of the Lord Who is over both of you, rather, disdain Him. He is not coming to call people according to appearance, but upon those whom the Spirit has made ready. Now, you who are servants should be submissive to your lords in sobriety and fear, as to a type of the Lord God.

Among these, you will see every hypocrisy and all of that which is not pleasing to God. You will by no means forsake the Lord's precepts, but you will guard what you have received—neither adding to them nor removing from them. You will acknowledge your wanderings in an assembly, and you will not come forward to your prayer with an evil consciousness. This is the way of life.

CHAPTER 2

Now, the way of death is this: first of all, it is evil and full of curses: murders, adulteries, strong desires, unlawful sex acts, thefts, idolatries, magical acts and sorceries, robberies, false witnesses, utmost hypocrisies, two-heartedness, deceit, arrogance, badness, assumptions, greed, shameful conversation, unrighteous jealousy, an overbearing nature, loftiness, pride; persecutors of that which is good, hating truth and loving falsehood; not knowing the treasure of that which is right, nor clinging to the good, nor to just judgment; watching not for good but for evil. Far from these people are meekness and endurance.

They love worthless things, pursue revenge, and do not show mercy to the poor. They do not labor for those who are weary, not knowing the One Who made them; they are murderers of children, corruptors of the molded image of God. They turn away those in need and oppress the afflicted.

They are comforters of the wealthy, lawless judges of the poor, and universal sinners. Children, may you be rescued from all of these things. See to it that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, since it does not teach you. If indeed you are able to be the whole of the Lord's yoke, you will be whole. But if you are not able, do what you are able to do.

CHAPTER 3

Now, about food: take hold of what you are able to hold. Look out for the idol sacrifices, for this is a religious service of the false gods, who are dead, however.

And, about baptism, baptize in this way: after first uttering all of these things, baptize "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," in running water. If there is no running water, baptize in other water. If there is no cold water, baptize in warm water. If there is neither, pour water three times onto the head in the same formula. Before the ritual cleansing, the baptizer and the one being baptized should fast, and any other persons who are able. You will give word for the one who is being baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand, as they are able. Do not let these fasts be with hypocrites, however. They fast on the second day of the week, and on the fifth. You, however, should fast on the fourth day and the day of preparation. You will not pray like the hypocrites, but as the Lord gave word in His Gospel, pray like this: "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. [For the Kingdom and the power and the glory are Yours forever.] Amen." Pray this way three times, daily.

Now, about the Thanksgiving, that is, the Divine Mystery, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the ordained give thanks this way: first, about the cup: "We thank You, our Father, for the Holy Vine of Your son David which You have made known to us through Jesus Your Son. Glory be to You for the age." About the broken bread, give thanks this way: "We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge that You have made known to us through Jesus Your Son. Glory be to You for the age. Just as this broken bread was scattered on the top of the hills, and as it was gathered together and became one, in the same way let Your assembly be gathered together from the remotest parts of the land into Your Kingdom. For Yours is the glory and the power through the Christ Jesus for the age. Now, no one should either eat or drink from Your Thanksgiving meal, but those who have been baptized according to the authority of the Lord. For about this the Lord Jesus also said, 'do not give that which is holy unto the dogs.'"

Now, after you have been filled, give thanks this way: "We thank You, Most Holy and Everlasting Father, for Your holy name, which You made to live in our hearts, and for the knowledge and trust and immortality which You made known to us through Jesus Your Son. Glory be to You for the age. Almighty Lord, it was You Who created all for the sake of Your name. You gave both food and drink to the people for enjoyment, so that they might give thanks to You. But to us You have freely given spiritual food and drink, and eternal life through Your Son. Before all things, we are thankful to You that You are powerful. Glory be to You for the age. Lord, remember Your Church, and remember to rescue her from every evil and to make her complete in Your love; and to gather her from the four winds into Your Kingdom which You prepared for her—her which has been made holy. For Yours is the power and the glory for the age. Let generosity come, and let this universe pass away. Hosannah to the Son of David! If anyone is holy, let them come. If anyone is not, let them change their mind. Maranatha. Amen."

Now, permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they desire.

CHAPTER 4

The one who comes and teaches you all of these things which have been previously uttered, accept them. But if this teacher should turn to teach another thing, so as to release this one, do not listen. If they teach to promote what is right according to these, which is the knowledge of the Lord, accept them as you would the Lord. Now, about the envoys and the prophets, do just as according to the tenet of the Gospel. To each envoy who comes to you, accept as you would the Lord. But this envoy will not remain for one day; but, if there is need, let them remain the next day. If they remain for three, let them be counted as a false prophet.

When the envoy departs, they should take nothing except bread until they lodge. If they ask for money, they may be counted as a false prophet. And, every prophet who speaks with the Spirit, you will neither test nor judge, for every sin will be forgiven. Do understand, not everyone who speaks with the Spirit is a prophet; but, if they have the conduct of the Lord. Therefore, from their conduct, the false prophet and the prophet will be made known. No prophet with the Spirit who orders a meal eats from it, unless he is a false prophet.

If a prophet teaches the truth, but does not as they teach, they are to be counted as a false prophet. Every prophet who has been proved, who is true, who does things for the cosmic secrets of the assembly but not does not teach to do as such, will not be judged among you. For the ancient prophets did it this way too. Whoever says with the Spirit, “Give me money (or something else),” you will not listen to them. But if they say to give on behalf of others in need, no one should judge the prophet.

Everyone who comes in the name of the Lord should be accepted. Afterward, you will examine them to know them. You will have full understanding, right and left if you do this. If the one comes is a traveler, help them as much as you are able. They will not remain with you, however, except two or three days, if there is a necessity. If they desire to dwell with you, since they are a craftsman, they should work to eat, however. If they have no craft, provide according to your understanding, so that no lazy person should be living among you as an “anointed one.” But, if they do not want to do this, they are one who profits financially from the anointed one. Be careful about such people. Now, every true prophet who wants to settle near you is worthy of their wage. In the same way, a true teacher is also worthy, just as the workman, of his wage. Therefore, every foremost part of the products of the press and threshing floor, both of oxen and sheep, you will take and give to the prophets—for they are your high priests under the High Priest Jesus. If you do not have a prophet, give these to the poor. If you bake bread, take the foremost part and give according to the precept.

In this same manner, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the foremost and give to the prophets. Now of money and clothing and every possession, take the foremost parts as you think it right and give according to the precept.

CHAPTER 5

According to the Lord’s Day, gather and break bread, giving thanks, after acknowledging your wanderings to one another, so your sacrifice would be a clean one before the Lord. But, to each one who has something against another, do not let them come together until they are reconciled, so that this sacrifice would not be made a common thing.

This is what was declared by the Lord, that in every place and time, carry to Him a clean sacrifice, because He is a great king, and His name is a wonderful thing among the people.

CHAPTER 6

To the leaders of the churches, handpick for yourselves the bishops and servants worthy of the Lord: men who are not meek, nor lovers of money, but true and proved. They are going to be giving religious service to you also, as the prophets and teachers are giving religious service.

CHAPTER 7

Now, be able to reprove one another in a spirit of peace, as you have it in the Gospel. No one should speak to each one who misses the mark against another, nor should they hear from you, until they change their mind. Your vows and charitable works, and all your practices, do these things as you have seen in the Gospel of our Lord.

Be vigilant on behalf of your life. Do not let your lamps be extinguished, and do not relax your loins. Rather, be prepared always. You do not know the hour in which our Lord God is coming. Now, you will gather often, seeking the things that are appropriate for your souls. All the time of your trust will not profit you, if you do not become complete in the last season.

In the last days, false prophets and corruptors will become multiplied, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love turned to hate. When lawlessness increases, they will hate everyone, and they will persecute and deliver up. The deceiver of creation will appear as the Son of God, and they will do signs and wonders to mock the Trinity. The land will be given up into their hands, and they will do lawless things which have never been done from the age.

Then, human creation will come into the fire of examination, and many will stumble and be destroyed by this great fire. Those who endure, however, will be saved from this cursed thing. Then, the signs of the truth will appear. First, the sign of an opening in the sky, and then the sign of a trumpet's sound. Third, there will be a resurrection of the dead. Not all people, however, as it was declared that the Lord will come and all the holy ones with Him. At last, creation will see the Lord coming on the clouds of the heavens.